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ABSTRACT

This document discusses the SPECTRA+ approach to education transformation, an effective arts education methodology that changes the way students, teachers, administrators, and parents think in order to create an environment conducive to learning. It establishes conditions that promote learning as a lifelong endeavor. The five major components of the approach are: (1) teacher training and professional development; (2) teaching the arts as individual entities; (3) integration, immersion, and infusion of the arts across the curriculum; (4) artists in residence; and (5) evaluation. SPECTRA+ is a site-based, site-managed approach that begins under the guidance and leadership of an arts agency. The basic principles of the SPECTRA+ approach include cognitive shift, expressive presentation, curriculum renewal, teacher leadership, the arts as basic, implementation, content, methodology, and evaluation. The Hamilton-Fairfield evaluation methodology is designed with five parts: (1) academic achievement; (2) self esteem; (3) locus of control; (4) creative thinking; and (5) appreciation of the arts. The core principle of the SPECTRA+ approach is to change the way people think about the arts as a valid form of communication and expression, as a tool to teach academic concepts, and as an authentic endeavor for vocational pursuits. The process deals with student performance and standards, school environment, instruction, and curriculum. The approach is structured through a local arts agency. Each site has a SPECTRA+ committee composed of teachers, parents, administrators, artists, a coordinator, and community members. Site selection, professional development, and funding are explained. (DK)

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Transforming Teaching and Learning through the Arts
The SPECTRA+ Approach

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Transforming Teaching and Learning through the Arts
The SPECTRA+ Approach
Section 1

Consisting of five major components, the SPECTRA+ approach to education transformation is an effective arts education methodology that changes the way students, teachers, administrators, and parents think in order to create an environment conducive to learning. In addition, the SPECTRA+ approach establishes conditions which promote learning as a lifelong endeavor beginning during the formative elementary school years.

The five major components of the SPECTRA+ approach are:

1. Teacher training / professional development.
2. Teaching the arts as individual entities.
3. Integration, immersion, infusion, of the arts across the curriculum.
4. Artists-in-residence.
5. Evaluation.

SPECTRA+ is a site-based, site-managed approach that begins under the guidance and leadership of an arts agency. It is not an imposed program, but rather one planned with school officials, teachers, artists, and parents to become adapted to local needs and requirements at each participating school. Linkages with the local community are created as the program is designed and implemented.

The basic principles of the SPECTRA+ approach include:

Cognitive shift: Intensive teacher training, which includes all teachers, embraces the arts as a tool to teach academic concepts, as a valid form of expression, and as an authentic endeavor for vocational pursuits. Through observation of quality arts initiatives and ongoing exposure to professional artists and their work, teachers and administrators begin the process of thinking differently about how a child is educated.

Expressive presentation: The arts disciplines of visual art, music, dance, and drama are integrated throughout the curriculum as well as taught individually as self-contained entities. Cognitive and linguistic development are accelerated and retention improved through systematically delivering academic subjects through arts experiences. Social development is improved as children apply critical and

creative thinking skills as teams and groups. Each child learns the importance of partnerships in problem discovery and problem solving while developing a strong self-concept.

Curriculum renewal: A curriculum is not fully planned and imposed, but rather emerges as a product of the symbiotic relationship of students, teachers, artists, parents, and community partners. Under the guidance of an arts agency staff coordinator, curriculum development becomes an additive process continually evaluated and modified. Community input is a vital component of curriculum development since building the curriculum transcends the school environment.

Teacher leadership: The SPECTRA+ approach expands the traditional teacher role beyond knowledge facilitator and places the teacher next to the child first as learning partner. This relationship creates role model learning for students to emulate. As they begin to observe active learning, students adopt and apply some of the same characteristics demonstrated by their teacher. Simultaneously, expertise is shared with the children by the teacher. During the process, the teacher also becomes evaluator / researcher as he/she gathers data and information on each student and documents their findings. At the same time, the teacher synthesizes information and events to create a new learning environment - a new school community. Teachers are also given additional planning time and encouraged to reflect on their personal involvement as teacher / learner.

The arts as basic: Long before humans could talk, read, or write they drew, danced, and drummed. This innate ability to express and communicate through art, movement, and music is slowly extracted as students move through the public school system. SPECTRA+ establishes the arts as a basic in the curriculum equal in importance to the academics. The mission is not to create more artists (any more than math is designed to create more mathematicians), but to develop more complete minds by balancing cognitive development.

Implementation: The SPECTRA+ approach to education transformation is not a packaged model designed to be imposed on a school. Rather, it is a process of planning initiated and coordinated by an arts organization which begins with a broad-based committee composed of teachers, parents, administrators, artists, and community members. The dialogue generated includes discussion about educational mission, possible curriculum content, exposure to professional artists

and their work, and the development of a collaborative framework for the approach. Individual schools, as SPECTRA+ sites, construct an educational framework with the arts at the core of the curriculum and as the universal theme throughout the school. An arts agency representative appropriately trained and specifically designated to the site coordinates the SPECTRA+ process. The broad-based committee ensures the development of an arts intensive framework that addresses the needs, both reactively and proactively, of each site.

Content: The arts present a multitude of learning and teaching opportunities. The arts also provide expansive opportunity for the application of creative teaching approaches. With such flexibility and openness, the curriculum becomes a structured depository of ideas, creativity, and interest driven by the students, teachers, artists, parents, and other members of the school and community.

Methodology: Classroom teachers learn about the arts through direct experiences. They transpose these experiences and utilize them in the classroom after joint planning with staff artists and arts specialists. Professional artists are placed on staff for long-term residencies. Short-term residencies are ongoing throughout the year with a variety of arts disciplines represented. Artists and teachers collaborate to explore teaching methods that synthesize academic concepts and quality arts experiences. Everyone working in unison creates curriculum, devises / refines teaching strategies, and shares equality in the teaching and learning process.

Evaluation: The Hamilton-Fairfield (Hamilton and Fairfield, Ohio) SPECTRA+ program was the first arts education initiative nationally to devise a comprehensive and sophisticated empirical evaluation study. Extending beyond documentation, a valid evaluation must be planned and designed prior to the establishment of a SPECTRA+ site with an experienced researcher leading the process. The Hamilton-Fairfield evaluation methodology is a five part design including:

1. Academic achievement.
2. Self-esteem.
3. Locus of control.
4. Creative thinking.
5. Appreciation of the arts.

Transforming Teaching and Learning
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Section 2

Vision: The core principle of the SPECTRA+ approach is to change the way people think about the arts as a valid form of communication and expression, as a tool to teach academic concepts, and as an authentic endeavor for vocational pursuits.

Mission: To improve teaching and learning in the public and parochial elementary schools through the arts for all students.

Goals:
1. To develop whole minds.
2. To improve the learning environment.
3. To improve self-esteem and internal locus of control.
4. To improve creative and critical thinking skills.
5. To form school / community partnerships.
6. To develop an appreciation and understanding of the arts.

Process:

Student Performance / Standards:

Teachers, parents, artists, and administrators participate in developing standards by which student performance is measured. Still evolving, these standards will reflect the effectiveness of the teaching / learning process through assessment of the quality of the objects or products resulting from this process. Emphasis should always focus on the process rather than the product. Other educational standards reflect performance in academic achievement, self-esteem, creative and/or critical thinking, etc.

School Environment:

The arts bring a renaissance in the aesthetic environment of the classroom and school. The environment becomes more conducive to teaching and learning through reinvented spaces appropriate for individual or small group experiences. This new aesthetic induces an atmosphere of exploration and discovery, reflection and investigation, and multilateral communication. Students begin to utilize all senses in the learning experience.

Instruction: A continuing teacher training program provides arts and classroom teachers a diverse array of methods and activities to utilize in the classroom. Teachers become learning partners rather than disseminators of knowledge. Additional planning time allows teachers to work with visiting or staff artists. Students, through interactive participation, work daily with both teachers and artists. Students experience art, music, dance, drama, creative writing, or media arts both as individual subjects taught by professional artists / arts specialists and as a vehicle for the delivery of academic concepts through teaching partnerships comprised of artists and classroom teachers.

Curriculum: Emerges as a product of the symbiotic relationship formed among students, teachers, artists, parents, administrators, and community members. The curriculum is open and flexible and reflects the interests, insight, needs, and ideas of the planning partners and students. The nature of the arts in education is to create extended project work, incorporate innovation, explore a variety of perspectives, to justify and utilize repetition, and to encourage reflective thought and judgment.

STRUCTURE

Local Arts Agency:

Coordination and fiscal management are under the auspices of a local arts agency / organization with a staff person from same designated as coordinator. Aesthetic / artistic decisions, grantwriting, accounting, evaluation, and general administration are under arts agency management. Specific program design and implementation are controlled by each SPECTRA+ site.

SPECTRA+ Committee:

Each site has a SPECTRA+ Committee composed of teachers, parents, administrators, artists, coordinator, and community members.

Selection: Sites are selected through an application process. The SPECTRA+ approach begins in the elementary school(s) and expansion, depending on community needs, may be lateral or vertical.

Professional Development:

A comprehensive teacher training program continues throughout the project. Focus is on experiences for classroom teachers ranging from studio arts involvement to aesthetic education.

Funding: Seventy percent of direct costs should be provided by the Board of Education. Funds are completed / supplemented by the local arts agency. Per pupil cost averages $70 depending on enrollment. Per school cost averages $50,000 to $60,000 (500 to 1000 student body). These figures are subject to the economic environment of individual communities.

For more information on SPECTRA+:

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